



ALBERTA TEACHERS
OF ENGLISH AS
A SECOND LANGUAGE

ATESL Newsletter

President's Message

President Dora DiLullo Patten



Well, it's hard to believe that we are more than a year into this pandemic. I think that it has proven to be a great equalizer – we are all in it together. As usual, the people in our profession are showing how, when met with adversity, we stand up to the challenge. We have become creative, innovative and we are discovering an inner strength that has made us better for it. Technology is connecting us to anyone, anywhere at any time, which has its advantages but also, its disadvantages. For those in our profession and your ATESL team, it has provided us with a new way to work and live, where work and life balance is constantly being negotiated. Looking back on this year and observing how our ATESL members have dealt with this extraordinary time, I am inspired by what I have seen and feel a sense of hope for the road ahead.

Hope for the future is a sentiment that is shared by our conference managers Sofia Elgueta and Denise Lo. I am pleased to introduce them both. They are remarkable individuals that have hit the ground running

and one of the tasks they have completed was providing the theme for this year's online ATESL conference in the fall. The theme is Lighting the Future: Expanding Expectations.

I am excited to say that keynote speakers have been secured and I am personally over the moon with the choices. I won't take away the Conference Managers' thunder by making the announcement. If you are interested in joining a dynamic team and getting involved in the conference, please contact Sofia or Denise at conference2021@atesl.ca.

Another individual who has been busy for ATESL is our Member at Large, Nura Mohamed. She has been researching the feasibility and benefits of a charitable branch for ATESL. Also noteworthy: ATESL's interprovincial affiliates have been busy building connections and sharing projects and initiatives with us at ATESL. Our Best Practices project is coming along nicely and we are very pleased with the progress and quality of the document. It is relevant and helpful. Focus groups will be reviewing the document shortly for feedback. Watch your emails for requests from the Best Practices team, Sara Gnida and Herly Cervera.

We had our annual budget meeting and were pleasantly surprised at our current financial position. It is with great pleasure that we are able to continue to provide funding for bursaries to our members. This year we will be awarding more support to first time presenters at the fall ATESL conference. If you are thinking of presenting for the first time, please let us know. The online conference has given us a boost financially and we will be connecting further with our online conference and endeavours.

Our Health Benefits insurance provider has proposed a new way of providing custom-made insurance that accesses a broader range of brokers and would cover more than just health insurance. Please look for this information in the newsletter.

To conclude, I am feeling optimistic about our situation as teachers and our organization. Theodore Roosevelt said, "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are."

I think that as teachers, we exemplify that saying – we are more than the sum of our parts and we meet challenges head on to produce exceptional work.

Because of that, I know that what comes out of this pandemic will be a better version of what we were before. So, thank you for all your hard work, patience, perseverance and commitment to our profession.

Keep safe and healthy,
Dora Di Lullo-Patten
ATESL President

What's inside this issue:

President's Message -
Dora DiLullo Patten

Calgary Local Report Priscilla Lee & Nancy Robertson

Edmonton Local Report
Fiza Abedin & Daniel Green

Southern AB Local Report ---
Lauren Barrows & Alana Johnson

Rural Routes Update
Jim Hawrylenko

TESL Canada Report
Wendy Chambers

Dear Advocacy Folks
Advocacy Committee

ESL Games Night
Jane Morgan

Conference Report
Sofia Elgueta & Denise Lo

Best Practices Project Update
Herly Cervera & Sara Gnida

ATESL Group Benefits Information

Calgary Local Report

Despite the fact that 2020 was a rather turbulent year for the Calgary Local, 2021 has gotten off to a great start, and we are very grateful for the support and participation of our members!

The committee is comprised of three members: Priscilla Lee and Nancy Robertson as Co-chairs and Peggy Jubien as the Secretary/Treasurer. We meet regularly to plan PD sessions and we always welcome suggestions and ideas. Please feel free to contact us at calgary@atesl.ca at any time.

Our aim is always to provide a variety of PD offerings, both in topic and in scheduling, to appeal to as many interests and teaching schedules of our members as possible. We also extend our invitations to our PD sessions to all ATESL members across the province. To date, all of our sessions have been held on Zoom, and we will continue to do so under the current circumstances. Pending the presenter's consent, we do record the sessions. If you are interested in a particular session but unable to attend, please let us know and we can send the recording and any relevant materials to you.

So far this year, we have featured PD sessions on CLB writing profiles of ability and on academic integrity in an online environment.

Thursday, May 6, 5:00 - 6:00 pm: Stress Reduction for ESL teachers, presented by John Wang, Mental Health Counsellor from The Immigrant Education Society (TIES)

Tuesday, June 1 from 4:00 - 5:30 pm: Covid Delivery Mode Discussion Panel

Panelists from various ELL providers in Calgary will discuss challenges, opportunities and recommendations for the delivery mode they are currently using to teach their ELL courses. Delivery modes to be discussed include asynchronous, RTOL (Real-time Online), hybrid, in-person, and remote teaching to literacy learners with both online and print materials.

We always appreciate the time and effort of our presenters and their willingness to share their expertise and experience. If you have a topic in mind and would like to present, please do let us know.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Robertson and Priscilla Lee
Calgary Local Co-chairs

Edmonton Local Report

Happy Spring Everyone,

The Edmonton Local has had a great year so far! We have continued to host our PD session online through Tutela and Big Blue Button, and we could not be more thrilled with the amount of attention, support, and engagement the Edmonton area's language teachers have been contributing to our community. We are thrilled to see an average of 40 members at each presentation, and to see that our Tutela group has swelled to 250 members in under two years!

At the beginning of 2021, Heejae Chung returned to talk about Implementing Various Technology Tools to Increase Learner Motivation and Engagement.

We then had the CLB consultant Alison Vickerman share her expertise on Resources and Supports for LINC Program Remote Delivery.

In March, Sabine Ricioppo shared her presentation CLB Writing Assessment: How Does Grammar Affect Communicative Competence, where participants looked at student samples and judged the communicative competence with fellow LINC instructors. We had great feedback for each and every presentation!

We are incredibly thankful to Heejae, Alison and Sabine for volunteering their time to speak to our members and share their expertise! If you are interested in sharing your experience through a PD, feel free to contact edmonton@atesl.ca.

Looking forward, here are the upcoming PDs before the session pause for the summer break:

April 30th, 2021: Learning Difficulty and Learning Disability with Xun (John) Wang

May 28, 2021: Online Grammar Teaching Resources with Dr. Leila Ranta

June 25, 2020: Online Teaching - Asynchronous Tips for the First 15 Minutes of Class with Daniel Green

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Edmonton Report continued:

More information about these events can be found on ATESL's Event page. To access these webinars, please join the ATESL Edmonton Local Chapter group on Tutela (<https://tutela.ca/GroupHome?organicgroup=31037>)

We will take a brief break in July/August and be back in the fall for our annual AGM and PD night.

Finally a huge shout out to Marie Fontaine, James Hawrylenko, Maryna Siek, and Rosemary McMahan, our local chapter's secretary, hospitality and treasurer/communications officer, respectively.

Thank you so much for all of your help and expertise organizing these events!

The Edmonton local chapter is currently seeking members interested in the co-chair and the communication officers position. For more information, please contact edmonton@atesl.ca.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Green and Fiza Abedin,
Edmonton Local Co-chairs

Coming Soon: Attention literacy instructors!

Please keep an eye out for a new regular network and information series coming to you from the ATESL Advocacy Committee.

Central Alberta Local Call

Do you want to represent your profession in the province and help steer the organization forward? Do you have a passion for professional development and take pride in your work?

ATESL is looking for an enthusiastic individual to represent our Central Alberta members on the Board, and to coordinate and run Professional development opportunities in the Central Alberta Local.

If you are interested in this position, know someone who is not an ATESL member that you think might be a good fit, or have any questions about what the role entails, please email Irene Wood at atesl.admin@atesl.ca

Southern Alberta ATESL Local Report

Happy Spring!

We are looking forward to welcoming ATESL members from across the province to our upcoming Southern Alberta PD workshop on April 22nd from 7:00 to 8:30pm when we welcome Patrice Palmer and Victoria Senyard to speak on mindfulness and a peer-to-peer mental health platform. Please RSVP to southernab@atesl.ca and we will send you a link to join us on Zoom. If you are reading this after the session is over, we hope you enjoyed it!

If you have any suggestions for a future PD session or would like to present something to Southern ATESL Members, please do contact us at southernab@atesl.ca. We value your suggestions and input!

Respectfully submitted,
Lauren Barrows and Alana Johnson
Southern Alberta Local Co-chairs

Rural Routes Report

RR is working on several new initiatives that will be ready in the summer or fall. The first is a renewed multi-level curriculum and resource for teachers with lesson plans and practical guides to adapting a resource to a different CLB level.

There are two new resources on the Rural Routes resource list:

- The ESL Tutor Training Handbook (New resource for ESL tutors in the CALP system: Complete handbook and guide with needs assessment, lesson planning, learner plans, games and activities.
- The ESL Resource Guide (This guide was designed as an annotated list of resources for tutors, teachers, and volunteers to use when working with English-language learners. The resources have been curated by the following criteria: relevance and/or applicability to the Alberta context, easy to use, has an identified language level, year of publication, and Creative Commons licensed.)

Upcoming events (all online) include:
April: Another round of the study group "Responding to Student Writing"

May/June: "Anti-Racism Talking Circles"

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Hawrylenko
Rural Routes Representative

TESL Canada Report

The TESL Canada board meets online each month to review and discuss the reports, motions, and action items provided by the executive members, the committee chairs, and the provincial representatives.

In January, TESL Canada received a donation from a philanthropic member who wished to remain anonymous. In accordance with the wishes of the donor, each provincial affiliate selected the name of a member to receive a complementary membership. ATESL randomly selected an individual whose membership had recently lapsed.

The early view edition of the spring 2021 TESL Canada Journal is available on the website. The next special issue is Plurilingualism and Translanguaging: Pedagogical Approaches for Empowerment and Validation. For details on the special issue, please see the website.

The *TESL Canada Connects* newsletter will be published in May, so watch your email inboxes. TESL Canada is finalizing details with Blue Cross to provide health insurance for interested members. Auto insurance through RBC is also being renewed for TESL Canada members. Updates will be available soon on the website.

The TESL Canada Educational Foundation is offering two \$250 Professional Learning bursaries and applications are due April 12th, 2021. One Scholarship Grant is also available, due June 1st, 2021. Details about the bursaries and the scholarship grant, including the application forms, are available here.

The Settlement Language National Network committee, lead by Elsie Johnson, undertook an incredible project over the past year, and the result is the publication of the *Stories of Us: Life and Learning in the Time of COVID*

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2020/2021 ATESL Board

President- Dora DiLullo

Patten

President Elect- Gabriela

Jessome

Past President- Lori Kennedy

Treasurer- Jess Legacy

Secretary- May Yeung

Calgary Co-chairs-

Priscilla Lee & Nancy

Robertson

Edmonton Co-chairs-

Fiza Abedin & Daniel Green

Southern AB Co-chairs-

Lauren Barrows & Alana

Johnson

Rural Routes Representative-

Jim Hawrylenko

Charitable Investigation

Member at Large-

Nura Mohamed

TESL Canada Representative-

Wendy Chambers

Business Manager-

Irene Wood

Advocacy Committee

Wendy Ilott

Alexandra Marshall

Wanda Chell

Eman Ghanem

Becca Scheiris

Herly Cervera

Amy Abe

Jess Legacy

Lori Kennedy

Dora Di Lullo-Patten

TESL Canada report continued:

The stories were submitted in response to TESL Canada's National Storytelling contest funded by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada. The stories were penned by Canadian LINC students and their teachers.

The next TESL Canada AGM will be held in the spring and at that time, Paula Kristmanson will be stepping down as President after serving a 3-year term. In her place will be Don Moen who has served as Vice President since January 2019. Paula's strong leadership is greatly appreciated.

Be sure to follow the latest and greatest TESL Canada news and events via the website (tesl.ca) and social media, including Twitter (@TESLCanada), Facebook, and LinkedIn.

Respectfully submitted by:
Wendy Chambers
ATESL TESL Canada Representative

Advocacy Committee: ESL Games Nights!

Keeping classes fun and interactive in an online teaching environment can definitely be a challenge! ESL Games Nights were created to address this and provide some much-needed socialization, networking, and professional development among teachers during the pandemic.

What's involved?

Every other Friday, an informal group of ESL teachers has been meeting from 7-8:30 pm over Zoom. Using a potluck style model, participating teachers are encouraged to bring one game that they would like to try out with the group. Examples so far have included 20 Questions, Simon Says, Eye-Spy and Charades.

By trying out the games together, we give each other an opportunity to work out the kinks, offering each other feedback and clarification regarding game logistics like:

How should the game be best adjusted to online delivery?

What rules and game parameters should be in place?

How can the games be tailored for particular English proficiency levels?

How can we optimize instruction delivery to make the game as simple and straightforward as possible?

These "dry runs" are also a great chance to get to meet other teachers as well. New teachers welcome!

Get in touch with Jane Morgan via email if you're interested in joining:
jane0820@gmail.com

Advocacy Committee:

Dear Advocacy Folks,

My coordinator just let us know that we have taken on a government contract to teach a community of newly arrived refugees. I have done some research on their home country and I predict a lot of them will be bringing trauma to the classroom. I am not a therapist! How am I going to teach in a meaningful way when my learners may be busy dealing with their trauma?

Best wishes,
Concerned in Camrose

Dear Concerned in Camrose,

You are right! We are not therapists, but in the classroom so much rises to the surface when working with refugee learners. The process of adapting and moving countries is stressful enough, when trauma is added to the learners' loads, it can be a lot for them to manage. Trauma can impact attention, memory, behavior, and even physical health. Teachers can be helpful in many ways and I recommend you check out more resources such as the Rural Routes workshop: Working with Trauma Affected Learners which helped me write this response to you.

Today I will just give you some basic teaching ideas to get you started as you plan to welcome this group of learners. Teaching techniques that support victims of trauma are usually also beneficial to all of the class, so it is helpful to plan to integrate these ideas early on.

Make it predictable:

- Plan your teaching around predictable and consistent routines. Like folks with ADHD, traumatized learners may have trouble focusing for long sets of instructions. Predictable routines allow all learners to fully participate. After the first time, they don't need to carefully follow an explanation of how to do an activity in order to be successful.
- Predictability and routines build a feeling of safety. Avoid surprises like pop quizzes or unexpected disruptions.
- At the start of each class give an overview of the activities you have planned for the day and what you expect learners to do during class.
- Whenever possible provide examples of the work you expect. They will feel more comfortable because they know what they will need to do.
- If evaluating, provide a description of the task and the evaluation criteria as early as possible. The stress of evaluation can trigger other stressful feelings from the past, so keep it as relaxed as you possibly can. Help learners be aware of the supports they can and can't use, the format of the task, and the testing conditions (e.g. bags at the front of the class) well in advance. You may even want to do a simulation of the test as part of a low stress, in-class activity. They will be more comfortable and familiar with everything that is expected. (con't)

(Dear Advocacy Folks continued)

Help them to have control

- As much as you can, give learners choices. This may mean choices of where to sit in the classroom, who they can partner with, the format of their task etc. Giving them that sense of agency in the classroom environment helps them to feel more in control of their own learning.
- Provide asynchronous resources that learners can access on their own time to fill in the gaps in case they had difficulty being present during class time.
- Help learners become aware of their own strengths and abilities. Once they have started to identify when and how they can be successful you can often transition the conversation to informal goal setting and ways to leverage their abilities to be more successful.

Once the learners arrive you may need to consider how you will handle it if they disclose stories to you one on one or in front of the whole class.

You may also want to consider teaching self-regulation techniques so that learners can learn how to maintain their presence in class.

Finally, take care of yourself. Compassion fatigue is a real threat when working with traumatized folks.

All of these topics are very important but too large for the scope of this letter. I recommend you also look into how you are going to manage once they arrive.

We have provided some resources below that you may find helpful.

Good luck in your teaching and let us know how it goes!

The Advocacy Folks

To learn more, check out these resources

- Bow Valley College. (2018). A Practical Guide to Teaching ESL Literacy. Calgary: Bow Valley College. (pp.119-136)
- https://globalaccess.bowvalleycollege.ca/sites/default/files/ESL-Literacy-Book-August-24-2018-Digital_0.pdf
- Mediacop (2015, September, 21). Trauma and the Brain. [videofile] Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-4cKYx24aA>
- The NorQuest Rural Routes workshop <https://eslruralroutes.norquest.ca/home.aspx>
- Stop, Breathe & Think (2015, November). Stop, Breathe & Think: Mindfulness activities for the classroom. http://www.toolsforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/SBT_Mindfulness_Activities_For_The_Classroom.pdf

ATESL Best Practices – Invitation to participate in Focus Group Consultations

The 2009 ATESL Best Practices document is being updated!

The original nine sections have been updated, and the following new sections have been drafted:

- Indigenization
- LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion
- Anti-racism
- Supporting learners with Diverse Learning Needs
- Technology and Online Learning
- Essential Skills and Language for Work

Illustrative vignettes are being drafted for these sections, along with a vetted list of supporting resources.

Your input is valuable and requested!

The Best Practices team is holding Focus Group consultations on both the new and the updated sections of the Best Practices throughout the month of May and into June.

You are invited to participate in one or more of the focus group consultations.

- **Tuesday, May 11th:** Indigenization, LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion, Anti-racism -NEW
- **Thursday, May 13th:** Supporting learners with diverse learning needs -NEW
- **Tuesday, May 18th:** Technology and Online Learning - NEW
- **Thursday, May 20th:** Essential Skills and Language for Work, ESL Literacy - UPDATED
- **Tuesday, May 25th:** Instruction - UPDATED
- **Thursday, May 27th:** The Program, Staff, Learner Support, Resources- UPDATED
- **Tuesday, June 1st:** Learner Assessment, Curriculum, Canadian Language Benchmarks- UPDATED

All sessions will take place from 7:00-8:30 PM.

If you are interested in participating, please email: bestpractices@atesl.ca for more information.

Respectfully submitted by:
Sara Gnida
Best Practices Project Manager

CONFERENCE REPORT

ATESL Spring newsletter



**ONLINE
ATESL 2021
LIGHTING THE FUTURE
EXPANDING EXPECTATIONS**

Sharing the light

By Sofia Elgueta and Denise Lo

We are so honoured to have been appointed Conference Project Managers this year! Thank you for the support we've received from the organization, previous conference Managers and for the many volunteers who have generously offered their experience and time to make the 2021 ATESL Conference a success!

We think this year's theme will resonate with anyone who has been involved in teaching English in the last 13 months. During this time, we survived a global pandemic and transitioned our teaching online, kept our students engaged while giving them the language tools they needed to communicate in their specific settings. We have learned so much from our experience. As the world transitions back into more face-to-face interactions, we would like to reflect on how this experience has changed us as instructors and how we will bring the lessons learned and the resources discovered into our practice.



UPDATES

**SOCIAL MEDIA
CAMPAIGN: KEYNOTE
ANNOUNCEMENTS!**

**ALL COMMITTEES
FORMED - THANK YOU
COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND
VOLUNTEERS!**

**SETTING REGISTRATION
FEES AND TICKETING
OPTIONS**

**CALL FOR
PRESENTATIONS
COMING OUT IN MAY**

**SPONSORSHIP,
DONATIONS AND
PUBLISHERS
COMMITTEES REACHING
OUT**

We feel hopeful, finally, after many months of not daring to hope. We are looking with hope into the future. Light represents this hope but it also represents ideas, knowledge, and technological development. We also hope our experiences and growth will illuminate the future of our teaching.

New technologies and the ingenuity we had to develop raised the bar, and the expectations are now greater than ever. With the possibility of going back to teaching face to face, or in a blended format, or continuing online, these expectations expand even more.



Keynote speakers

We have reached out to three amazing keynote speakers and are so excited to announce them! We are sure you will recognise AT LEAST one name and may have one or several of their books in your shelves.

These speakers have proposed presentation topics that are extremely interesting and fit well with this year's theme. We are positive all Conference attendees, regardless of the ESL/EAL course they are teaching, will find their presentations relevant, practical, and inspiring.

We are releasing the names of this year's notable speakers one by one in a media campaign. Our Social Media Committee will be posting hints daily/every other day and reveal the speaker at the end of the week.

Be sure to follow us to find out who will share their light at this year's Conference. Tell your friends!

STAY TUNED - GET READY TO SPARK!

We are working hard for this year's conference to offer the perfect space to share our knowledge and experience, to share the light, and to help each other fulfill those growing expectations as we look to the future of teaching English in our province.

Stay tuned for more exciting announcements about our lineup of keynote speakers, registration information and the call for presentations! We look forward to having you join this year's ATESL Conference and sharing the light!

Follow us @ateslnews for more conference updates and giveaways!

